

For Immediate Release

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National Teen Driver Safety Week is October 19-25; Parents Matter When It Comes to Keeping Teens Safe Behind the Wheel

Lincoln – Nebraska parents protect their kids their whole lives, whether it is teaching them how to cross the street safely or putting them in a car seat. When it comes to teen driving, parent protection should be no different. Parents have the power to protect their teen from their leading cause of death: motor vehicle crashes.

"Parents should recognize that their direct involvement has both immediate and long-term benefits to the welfare of their teen," said Dr. Joseph Acierno, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. "Safe driving is a learned skill, and more than anyone else, parents have the greatest influence on shaping their teen into a safe and capable driver."

Parents who are involved with their teen driver in a supportive way can lower their teen's crash risk by 50 percent. Teens with involved parents are also twice as likely to use their seat belt, 70 percent less likely to drink and drive, half as likely to speed, 30 percent less likely to use a cell phone while driving and significantly less likely to drive with multiple passengers, according to studies done by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

There are many proven tools that parents can use to keep their teen safe at the wheel.

- Start the conversation early with your teen about safe driving and model safe driving habits such as buckling up, driving the speed limit and no cell phone use while driving.
- Understand current state Graduated Driver Licensing laws. These laws protect novice drivers by keeping them out of high risk driving situations and allowing time to gradually gain safe driving skills. Information is available at <http://www.dmv.nebraska.gov/examining/overview.html>
- Set aside time for you and your teen to practice driving. We would not expect them to participate in athletics or a play without many hours of practice. Driving should be no different.
- Use a parent-teen driving agreement. These agreements spell out the driving rules for your teen driver and can make sure both parent and teen agree on what rules are to be followed.

In Nebraska, on average, two teens are killed every month due to motor vehicle crashes. Parents have the power to prevent this from happening.

The Drive Smart Nebraska Coalition, a coalition of public and private partners dedicated to eliminating injuries and deaths on Nebraska roads, are supporting many teen driver safety programs and activities across the state. These include Teens in the Driver Seat, Celebrate My Drive, and Boy Scout Jubilee.

For more information about teen drivers, read the 2013 Nebraska Teen Driver Report at http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/hew_hpe_injury_index.aspx.

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Note: The following Nebraska schools are participating in the Teens in the Driver Seat Program.

- Centura High School Student Council
- Chambers High FCCLA & National Honor Society
- Creighton Community Schools FCCLA
- Exeter-Milligan FCCLA
- Fullerton Public Schools Student Council
- Gering High School Student Council
- Howells-Doge Consolidated Schools FCCLA
- Lincoln Southwest FCCLA
- Malcolm Public Schools Student Council
- Medicine Valley FCCLA
- Norfolk High Panther Octagon Club
- Scottsbluff High School FCCLA
- St. Edward Public School FCCLA
- Waverly High School FCCLA

Also, a PSA is available for media use at <http://www.safercar.gov/parents/getinvolved.htm>.